

Marian Studies

Volume 32 *Proceedings of the Thirty-Second National
Convention of The Mariological Society of America
held in Tampa, FLA.*

Article 6

1981

Report on the 1981 Convention (Tampa, FLA)

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Recommended Citation

Koehler, Théodore (1981) "Report on the 1981 Convention (Tampa, FLA)," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 32, Article 6.
Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol32/iss1/6

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REPORT ON THE 1981 CONVENTION (TAMPA, FLORIDA)

Some fifty delegates gathered in Tampa, Florida for the 32nd Annual Convention of the Mariological Society of America, held January 6th and 7th, 1981. As they did two years ago, the Sisters of the Franciscan Center offered us the facilities of their house, and the temperate climate of Tampa was a much-appreciated change for the Northerners present.

As foreseen, the first session began with registration at 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, January 6th, in the conference room of the Center. At 10:00 a.m., after Sister Maggie had said a word of welcome in the name of the Center, it was the turn of Very Reverend Brendan Muldoon, V.F., Pastor of the Church of the Incarnation, the local parish. He addressed the audience and welcomed us to the diocese of Tampa, in the name of His Excellency W. Thomas Larkin. The Bishop of St. Petersburg (whose invitation is given above) had already excused himself for not personally attending, because of a retreat for bishops that was scheduled at the same time in North Palm Beach. He had asked Very Rev. J. Keith Symons, his Vicar General and Chancellor and an active member of our Society, to replace him. At the time of the Convention, however, Fr. Symons had to be replaced due to the flu. As you probably already know through the press, Fr. J. Keith Symons has—in the meantime—been named the first Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. We have sent him our congratulations, promising him the prayers of the Society.

After an opening prayer by our Episcopal Chairman, His Excellency, Most Reverend Austin B. Vaughan, Auxiliary Bishop of New York and Episcopal Vicar of Orange County, the first session proceeded with the Presidential Address of Rev. Roger M. Charest, S.M.M. The President paid homage to members of the Society who died in 1980: Fr. Cyril Vollert, S.J., and Fr. Eugene Maly, exegete

and professor at Mount Saint Mary Seminary (Cincinnati). Fr. Char-est also paid tribute to three other scholars and apostles of Mary who had died within the past year: Fr. Joseph A. de Aldama, S.J., patrologist and active member of the Spanish Mariological Society; H. Martin Gillett, founder and secretary of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary in England; and Frank Duff, the founder of the Legion of Mary who resided in Dublin. The President then described the great interest which John Paul II has shown for the Marian shrines during his travels all over the world, and his particular insistence on the motherly presence of Mary among us.

Instead of Fr. Timothy J. Holland, S.S.J., who wrote us that he could not come, it was Rev. George Kirwin, O.M.I., who introduced our first speaker, Rev. Vincent Branick, S.M. Fr. Branick addressed us on "Modern Christologies and Mary's Place Therein: Biblical Aspect"; he outlined briefly the various Christologies given in the main texts of the New Testament: Mark, Luke (Gospel, Acts), Matthew, Paul, and John. Treating these Christologies, he also analyzed how each of these sacred writers presented Mary, whom they related constantly to Jesus' concrete humanity.

On one hand, we can conclude that Mary is "a sign of the concrete reality of Jesus in whom the diverse Christologies unite"; on the other hand, we can also say that she "symbolizes the unity of the canon and reminds us that the Christologies are only weak human tools to attain Christ." Mark stresses the paradox between Christ's lowliness and transcendence; Mary is, like Christ, one of God's poor, yet Jesus is Son of God and she is his mother. Luke describes Jesus as "the Lord," one with divine authority, yet also a man, humble and merciful. He does not mention the pre-existence of Jesus, but describes him in his unique relationship with the Father and as bearer of the Spirit: after the Ascension, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit. Luke parallels Mary with Jesus, showing her as Poor One, Woman of Faith dedicated to the plan of God, a person of prayer. But if Jesus is the Lord, Mary remains the servant, along with all the disciples. For Matthew, Christ is the Messianic King, humble and compassionate. Even though Matthew does not expound Jesus' divinity, there are in his texts significant state-

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ments about Jesus' divine-like transcendence, especially some which identify Jesus with pre-existent divine wisdom. He shows Christ in a unique relationship to the Father and also as the future Son of man, having authority over angels. In this context, Mary appears as the Queen Mother, revered with her Son by the Magi.

The Christology of Saint Paul is very important: it states the divine and eternal pre-existence of Jesus Son of God. To save us Jesus became the new Adam, emptying himself unto death on the Cross. Paul speaks of the Mother of Jesus only once, in reference to the humiliation of the pre-existent Son of God. Later, in Tradition, Mary was made the New Eve.

For John, Jesus is the revealer of God, therefore he appears as the Truth, as God, as the Son of the Father in heaven. Mary is called the Mother of Jesus; through her, the Saving Truth of God illuminates the world. The Truth is life-giving. Mary has a role in the gift of life; she is made mother of the disciples and symbol of the Church. John also provides the premises for the conclusion made by Tradition: Mary is Mother of God. We could also say that, in parallelism with the regal character of Jesus, John also sees in Mary a Queen-Mother figure.

The discussion which followed this rich exposé underlined the chronological order in which the texts of the New Testament appeared: Saint Paul being first. The doctrine of the divine pre-existence of Jesus, his divinity, was well established in the Christian communities of that time. Therefore, when Luke, for example, wrote his Gospel and the Acts, he could not ignore the faith of the Church in the divine pre-existence of Christ.

At noon the delegates gathered for the traditional refreshments and luncheon in the refectory of the Center. Our second session began at 2:30 p.m., with the election of Board members: Rev. William L. Lahay, S.S.C., replacing Rev. Alban A. Maguire, O.F.M., and Rev. Vincent Branick, S.M., replacing Rev. Peter D. Fehlner, O.F.M. Conv.

Father Fehlner then introduced our second speaker, Rev. James T. O'Connor, of the New York archdiocesan seminary at Dunwoodie, who delivered his paper on "Modern Christologies and Mary's Place Therein: Dogmatic Aspect." The speaker focused on two main ques-

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tions: the value given to the Chalcedonian definition (one person, two natures), and the modern problem of Jesus' self-awareness. He considered the positions of six theologians: W. Kasper, L. Boff, J. Sobrino, E. Schillebeeckx, K. Rahner, and the recently-translated book by K. Rahner and W. Thiising. They all criticize Chalcedon in different ways, denouncing the old "descending" Christology (Christ first is God) which appears to them to be of no use today. They try to build an "ascending" Christology, beginning with Jesus as a man among other men; this approach appears to them to be more familiar, more acceptable, to our modern mentalities. Fr. O'Connor challenged these positions and insisted especially on our need—still today—to use the *communicatio idiomatum* in our presentations of Jesus. He also noted that there is no real role given to Mary in these modern Christologies. The Infancy Narratives are neglected because of an exaggerated importance bestowed on the historical-critical methods in the exegetical interpretation of the Bible. The virginal conception of Jesus is considered as a late addition to the Gospel, and as not being rooted in familial sources. We must conclude from the analysis of Fr. O'Connor that too many modern Christologies are misleading for any correct understanding of our faith in the mystery of the Incarnation and in the mystery of Mary.

In the ensuing discussion, some criticism was expressed about an over-emphatic modern distinction between ascending and descending Christologies. The Fathers were not only interested in a descending Christology; there were various schools, especially in the Orient. All the Fathers insisted on the humanity of Christ, especially in their homilies for the liturgical season of the Nativity of the Lord.

At 4:30 p.m., the delegates gathered in the chapel of the Franciscan Center for a concelebrated Eucharist, presided over by our Episcopal Chairman, Bishop Austin Vaughan, who also gave the homily. Dinner followed, allowing for further discussions and elaborations of new projects for the future.

The Board of Directors met that evening, at 8:00 p.m. Present were: Most Reverend Austin B. Vaughan (Episcopal Chairman), Rev. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. (President Emeritus), Rev. Roger M. Charest, S.M.M. (President), Dr. William H. Marshner (Vice-President), Rev.

Theodore A. Koehler, S.M. (Secretary), Rev. Albert Bourke, O.C.D. (Treasurer), Rev. James T. O'Connor, Rev. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., Rev. Bernard Lazor, O.S.A., and (newly-elected) Rev. Vincent P. Branick, S.M., and Rev. William L. Lahey (replacing Rev. Alban A. Maguire, O.F.M.Conv., and Rev. Peter D. Fehlner, O.F.M.Conv.). Rev. John Hardon, S.J., was unable to attend. Bishop Vaughan opened the meeting with a prayer. The two new officers were welcomed. The work began with the preparation of our future conventions. We decided to foresee locations and dates for the next two conventions, to be sure that the Secretary would be able to organize these sessions at the places designated by the Board. The convention site for 1981 (January 4 and 5) was set for San Antonio, Texas, at the Oblate Fathers' Retreat House. For 1983 (January 4 and 5), it was decided to hold the convention at the Passionist Retreat House, in North Palm Beach, Florida.

The Board discussed topics for coming conventions. It was decided to study the great Marian dogmas from a contemporary reappraisal. Therefore, the topics selected for the 1982 Convention were: 1) *Introduction to the Problem of Papal Infallibility and Marian Dogmas*; 2) *The Divine Maternity and the Virginity of Mary in the Teaching of the Church*; 3) *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in Modern Ecclesiology*; and 4) *The Assumption and Eschatology*. Various other suggestions were made for future years (Mary and the Eucharist; Mary, Mother of Mercy; *Lex Orandi* and *Lex Credendi* in relation to Marian doctrine and devotion). Several members of the Society made written proposals which will be used by the Board in the coming years. Fr. Eamon R. Carroll was asked to continue his annual Survey on contemporary sources in Mariology.

Next, the Board studied the proposed amendment to the Constitutions and By-laws regarding the definition of active membership. According to the original text of the Constitution, active membership was restricted to "priests interested in promoting studies and research in Mariology." In recent years, however, the Society has accepted several laymen into active membership. Last year, the Board decided to propose a change in the Constitution and By-laws concerning active mem-

bers, and to present this proposal to the general assembly at the Business Meeting concluding the Convention of 1980.

The Board discussed the question of a representative for the meetings of the *Joint Committee of Catholic Learned Societies*. We needed a member of our Society residing in or near Washington, D.C.; Father Eamon R. Carroll, our representative in the past, is now in Chicago. Fr. Frederick Jelly represented the Mariological Society at the meeting this past Fall, but he lives in Columbus, Ohio. Professor Marshner, our Vice-President, accepted to carry out this responsibility; his home is near Springfield, Virginia.

On the suggestion made by Rev. Eamon R. Carroll, concerning an MSA Necrology, the Board decided to publish one in the 1982 issue of *Marian Studies*; the members of the Society would be requested to send any other information on deceased members of the MSA to the Secretary of the Society.

The list of new members of the Society was presented by the Secretary; it was decided that the Committee of Admissions should study it later, in terms of the new definition of active membership that would be accepted by the general assembly.

The Board examined the policy regarding payment of membership dues in the Society. It was decided to maintain the general policy that membership is lost if dues are not paid for two or more years in a row. Nevertheless, it was agreed that the Secretary, in consultation with the President and Treasurer, should judge whether to keep certain non-paying members on the membership list for reasons of scholarship and special influence, and to continue to send them *Marian Studies*. Policies regarding rate reductions for *Marian Studies* were also discussed. It was agreed that a rate of \$6.00 per volume, might be offered to missionaries in Third World countries, if it is necessary. Similarly, monasteries which indicate that they would like to receive *Marian Studies*, but find the cost prohibitive, may be asked for a donation rather than strict payment. It was further decided not to give any special rates or discounts to bookshops or subscription agencies. The Board discussed the increasing costs for printing *Marian Studies*. We must continue to search for an economical but satisfactory printer. Abbey Press sent us a

letter explaining that they changed their equipment, and passed to offset printing. This means a better and cleaner presentation of the texts and also a greater selection of type faces. The Board decided that, for the 1981 volume, we should continue with Abbey Press.

On Wednesday morning, January 7th at 8:00 a.m., Bishop Austin B. Vaughan again presided at our Eucharistic Concelebration, which was followed by breakfast. The sessions began at 9:00 a.m., with a prayer led by Bishop Vaughan. Rev. Francis J. Klauder, S.D.B., introduced the speaker, the Rev. Frederick M. Jelly, O.P., and his topic: "Mary's Intercession: A Contemporary Reappraisal." The speaker first placed the Catholic doctrine of Mary's intercession in a modern context: the ecumenical statement made at the International Marian Congress of Saragossa in October 1979. Significantly, this document presented the intercession of Mary and our prayer to Mary in the context of the great belief of the Church in the Communion of Saints. Father Jelly then analyzed the dogma in its triple dimensions: theological, liturgical, pastoral—each with its own ecumenical aspect. The English Anglican, Canon A. M. Allchin, wrote an article for *Marian Library Studies* (Vol. 10): "The Prayers of the Saints: Two Seventeenth-Century Views," and analyzed the problems: "Do the saints departed pray for us? May we ask them to pray for us? If so, in what way should we do it?" To answer these questions, Fr. Jelly reviewed the teachings of Vatican II, those of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, the texts of the revised liturgy, the Church's prayers to the saints. The invocation of Mary is rooted in our belief in Mary's presence: Mary was present with the Apostles in the Upper Room, and she is still present continuously in the Church. This belief appears clearly in *Marialis cultus* and in the teaching of Pope John Paul II; we pray with Mary, we imitate her prayer, we invoke her. How can we understand her active presence in the Communion of Saints, her intercession for us? Mary is *causa dispositiva*: she disposes us to our union with Christ.

After a ten-minute intermission, Rev. Charles W. Neumann, S.M., introduced Rev. Jean-Marie Salgado, O.M.I., who came to Tampa from Haiti, W.I., invited by our Society to speak to us on "Mary in the Catechetics of Latin America during the Sixteenth Century." He

told us that this paper was only part of a much larger study on Marian devotion in sixteenth-century catechetics in general. He already presented other sections of this work at the International Congress at Saragossa (1979) and to the French Mariological Society (1978). In order not to render his address a mere summary, he analyzed only one of the handbooks for Christian instruction used in Mexico: the *Doctrina Christiana*. Composed by the Dominicans, it was published in 1548, in Spanish and Mexican, in two parallel columns. Thirteen sermons were added to elaborate the doctrine.

This handbook follows the articles of the Creed; thus the Marian doctrine is constantly presented in relation with Christology. Mary is "the gentle and precious Virgin," Mother of God; she is "the glorious Queen of heaven," who never lost her virginity. Jesus gave his mother to his apostles as their mother, and he confided to her his divine grace: "So that she might give and distribute it to us sinners." Full of grace, she is our advocate and intercessor forever in heaven. Because she alone kept faith in Jesus after the crucifixion, we dedicate Saturday to her. Fr. Salgado noted that this handbook includes no reference to Guadalupe, to the apparitions which took place just seventeen years before it was printed.

Father Neumann as Reactor, confirmed the originality of the study, placing it in its historical background: the catechetical work of the first missionaries in Mexico, their use of the printing press, the apostolic efforts of the first bishop of Mexico city, the Franciscan, Juan de Zumárraga. The discussion stressed the fresh language and the tender Marian devotion of the *Doctrina breue* that was given to the Indians from the beginning of their evangelization.

The last general assembly began that afternoon at 1:30 p.m. Rev. Thomas B. Confer, O.P., introduced our last speaker, Rev. Eamon R. Carroll, a former teacher of his at Catholic University. Father Carroll divided his *Survey of Recent Mariology* into several categories: 1) Marian periodicals (*Marianum*, *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, *Cahiers marials*, *Scripta de Maria*); 2) Documents of the Magisterium; 3) Studies in Holy Scripture and Tradition; 4) General works and particular doctrines; 5) Liturgy and devotion; 6) Ecumenism; 7) Miscellanea. From

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the rich harvest of bibliographical, doctrinal, and devotional indications given by the speaker, we note the addition of the title "Mother of the Church" to the Litany of Loreto; the continuity of ecumenical efforts (the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in 1980); the discovery of the author of "Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly" (the Anglican priest, Roland Ford Palmer, ordained in 1916); and the publication of historical studies on *La Salette* (by J. Stern) and on Saint Catherine Labouré (by R. Laurentin).

At 2:30 p.m., the President, Fr. R. Charest, S.M.M., called for the Business Meeting. He announced the next annual conventions: 1982 in San Antonio, 1983 in North Palm Beach. Our Treasurer, Fr. A. Bourke, O.C.D., gave his annual financial report (published here on page 142). Fr. Matthew F. Morry gave a report on the Annual Meeting of the New England Region of the Mariological Society, held at Providence College (Rhode Island), Saturday, October 18, 1980. Fr. Eamon R. Carroll gave a conference on "Mary and the Family in Contemporary Society" to the fifty or more in attendance; Bishop Louis E. Gelineau was present. Later that morning, the delegates had a concelebrated Eucharist with Fr. Thomas B. Confer, O.P., as principal celebrant and Fr. Thomas U. Mullaney, O.P., as homilist. The President also then announced that the Texas regional unit would hold its Second Annual Convention on Saturday, February 28, 1981, at Saint Dominic's Diocesan Center, 2401 East Holcomb Blvd., Houston, Texas 77021. Centering on the *Virgin Mary of Guadalupe*, the first speaker was to be Fr. Virgil Elizondo, President, author of *La Morenita: Evangelizer of the Americas*, a recent book on Our Lady of Guadalupe. The second speaker, was to be Fr. Charles Neumann, S.M., one of our former presidents and currently theology professor at Saint Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas.

As foreseen at the Convention of 1980, the President then proposed for the vote of the assembly an amendment to our statutes regarding membership. A text had been prepared and distributed to all active members by the Secretary. This text had been thoroughly discussed at the 1981 Board Meeting, the evening before. The final version was proposed for the vote of the active members. After some discussion, the

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new definition was accepted by the assembly; this text is published right after this report, demonstrating clearly the transformation involved in according active membership to persons other than priests.

Father Charest brought the meeting to a close expressing the gratitude of the Society to the following:

- a) To His Excellency, the Most Rev. W. Thomas Larkin, Bishop of St. Petersburg, for inviting us to his diocese.
- b) To the Very Rev. J. Keith Symons, Vicar General and Chancellor of St. Petersburg diocese and long-time member of our Society, and to Very Rev. Brendan Muldoon, the local Dean, who welcomed us in the name of Bishop Larkin because Father Symons was sick.
- c) To His Excellency, the Most Rev. Austin B. Vaughan, the Episcopal Chairman of our Society, whose presence at this convention was most appreciated.
- d) To Mr. Arthur W. Clinton, Jr., and to the Very Rev. Stanley Matuszewski, editor of *Our Lady's Digest*, for their generous contributions to our Society, and to many other benefactors to whom we also owe our gratitude.
- e) To the staff of the Franciscan Center, especially Sister Odette, for the warm hospitality extended to us during the past two days.
- f) And finally, to our distinguished speakers and reactors, for their scholarly papers and thought-provoking discussions, and to our Secretary for the organization of this Convention.

Father Charest called for any further business or a motion to adjourn. Adjournment was moved, seconded, and officially declared at 3:00 p.m. Father Charest, as President, closed the Convention with a prayer of thanksgiving.

REV. THEODORE A. KOEHLER, S.M.
Executive Secretary